

Application No. 09/828,914

REMARKS

Claims 1-45 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1 and 30 are amended.

Applicants submit that these amendments should be entered after final rejection at least because: (1) they place the application in better condition for allowance or appeal; and (2) they could not have been made earlier because they are made in response to rejections set forth for the first time in the April 15 Office Action.

Applicants note with appreciation the allowance of claims 14-27, 29 and 36-45. Applicants also note with appreciation the identification of allowable subject matter in dependent claims 3, 4, 32 and 33. Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are in condition for allowance for at least the reasons set forth below.

Claims 1, 2, 5-13, 28, 30, 31, 34 and 35 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over U.S. Patent No. 5,677,754 to Makinouchi. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action asserts that elements 6A, 6B, 7A, 7B and 8 of Makinouchi correspond to the claimed imaging optical system, and that elements 6A and 6B of Makinouchi correspond to the claimed adjusting unit. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Clearly elements 6A, 6B, 7A and 7B of Makinouchi correspond to the claimed illumination area defining unit because they function to define a predetermined area corresponding to an illumination area to be formed on a mask. See, for example, col. 5, lines 21-36 of Makinouchi.

Thus, only element 8 (relay lens system) of Makinouchi is an imaging optical system that is located between the illumination area defining unit and a mask, and that forms an illumination area on the mask by projecting a predetermined area defined by the illumination area defining unit onto the mask. Because Makinouchi does not disclose or suggest any structure for adjusting the optical characteristic of relay lens system 8, Makinouchi does not

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disclose or suggest the claimed adjusting unit of claim 1 or the adjusting step of claim 30.

Withdrawal of the rejection based upon Makinouchi is requested.

Claims 1, 2, 5-13, 28, 30, 31, 34 and 35 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(c) over U.S. Patent No. 6,295,122 to Schultz et al. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

Schultz et al. does not disclose or suggest performing overlapping exposure. Thus, Schultz et al. does not disclose or suggest the claim 1 adjusting unit for adjusting an optical characteristic of said imaging optical system so as to improve an optical characteristic in an overlapping exposure area formed on said photosensitive substrate as recited in independent claim 1, or the adjusting step of adjusting an optical characteristic of said imaging optical system prior to said exposure step so as to improve an exposure characteristic in an overlapping exposure area formed on said photosensitive substrate as recited in independent claim 30. As described in Applicants' specification, the adjusting unit/step of claims 1 and 30 lowers an unevenness in the amount of exposure in overlapping exposure parts of the image. See, for example, page 7, lines 2-6, page 20, lines 6-22 and page 45, lines 2-13. Schultz et al. does not recognize or address this problem. Withdrawal of the rejection based upon Schultz et al. is requested.

Claims 1, 2, 5-13, 28, 30, 31, 34 and 35 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) over U.S. Patent No. 6,501,535 to Ozawa. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

The Office Action asserts that elements 9A and 9B of Ozawa correspond to the claimed imaging optical system, and that element 17 of Ozawa corresponds to the claimed adjusting unit. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Clearly, field stop 9A and variable field stop 9B of Ozawa are parts of the illumination area defining unit because they define a predetermined area corresponding to an illumination area to be formed on a mask. See, for example, column 6, lines 49-63 of Ozawa.

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Elements 8B and 10 of Ozawa are an imaging optical system that is located between an illumination area defining unit and a mask, and that forms an illumination area on the mask by projecting the predetermined area defined by the field stops 9A, 9B onto the mask. Because Ozawa does not disclose or suggest adjusting relay lens 8B or condenser lens 10, or the optical system defined by these lenses, Ozawa does not disclose or suggest the adjusting unit of claim 1 or the adjusting step of claim 30. Accordingly, withdrawal of the rejection based upon Ozawa is requested.

In view of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe anything further would be desirable to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants' undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

Mario A. Costantino
Registration No. 33,565

MAC/rle

Date: July 2, 2003

OLIFF & BERRIDGE, PLC
P.O. Box 19928
Alexandria, Virginia 22320
Telephone: (703) 836-6400

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